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SUBJECT: Taiwan Chiropractic Faces Long Road to Legalization

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#### Summary

¶1. (SBU) Taiwan does not recognize chiropractic as a legitimate medical practice, and chiropractors operate in a legal gray area. Taiwan Department of Health (DOH) authorities recommend that chiropractors establish a chiropractic school or course of study in Taiwan as an intermediate step to full legalization. Local chiropractic doctors, however, worry that even if the Taiwan medical community came to accept chiropractic's clinical merits, Taiwan's powerful doctors' associations would pressure the authorities to allow only licensed medical doctors to perform chiropractic. Chiropractors, therefore, continue to ask the authorities to both lift the DOH ban on chiropractic, and pass a Chiropractic Physician Law containing examination and licensing provisions. End summary.

#### Background

¶2. (U) The Taiwan authorities, unlike the World Health Organization (WHO) and most countries in East Asia, do not recognize chiropractic as a legitimate and distinct medical practice. Chiropractic doctors, therefore, may not advertise as such, nor may they advertise the efficacy of their treatments. Due to chiropractics' uncertain status in Taiwan, legitimate chiropractic doctors are frequent targets of raids by law enforcement officers, and often receive fines from the medical authorities based on complaints by dissatisfied customers.

¶3. (U) In 2006, a group of Taiwan legislators sought to enact a WHO-consistent Chiropractic Law, modeled on a similar Hong Kong law, that would have permitted chiropractors trained and licensed in the United States or another advanced country to practice legally in Taiwan. The Legislative Yuan (LY), however, did not pass the bill, due mostly to strong opposition from medical doctors and hospital industry associations.

14. (SBU) Economic Chief recently met with Department of Health (DOH) Vice Minister Chen Tzay-jinn to urge Taiwan to ease regulations on chiropractic. Chen suggested Taiwan's chiropractors, in order to gain official recognition, first introduce chiropractic techniques to the medical community and the Taiwan public by establishing a chiropractic school or course of study in a university. He said he knows of several schools interested in introducing chiropractic techniques into physical therapy curricula. Chen said chiropractors could build on this exposure by creating a certification process for domestic chiropractic doctors, and then working with the DOH and LY to establish an examination and licensing process.

15. (SBU) Chen recognizes this path to recognition is long and difficult, and offered alternatives to formal permission. For example, chiropractors could hold seminars or workshops for local medical associations or patients' groups in order to build up broader public acceptance of and demand for chiropractic, which could lead lawmakers to push for its legalization. In addition, Chen said chiropractors can operate more openly by advertising their techniques as "non-medical" or "alternative" physical services.

#### Taiwan-based Chiropractors Call for Legal Fix

16. (SBU) Local chiropractors, however, want chiropractic to be recognized as a legitimate and distinct medical practice, not a non-medical service or a sub-branch of modern medicine. Albert Lee and Mark Griffin, who represent the chiropractic industry in the Taipei American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham), recently told econoff

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chiropractic doctors worry that even if they prove the legitimacy of chiropractic by successfully establishing a chiropractic school or department in Taiwan, Taiwan's influential doctors' associations would convince the authorities to allow only licensed medical doctors to perform chiropractic. VM Chen's longer path to full recognition would, in their view, continue to marginalize chiropractic doctors. Lee and Griffin also worry that without legal recognition, chiropractic doctors will have no effective defense against lawsuits brought by unhappy patients, or "harassment" by police.

17. (SBU) According to Lee and Griffin, the only fix acceptable to the chiropractic industry in Taiwan would be for the authorities to lift legal barriers to chiropractic services, and establish a certification and licensing process. Specifically, they want the DOH to amend an October 15, 2003 Executive Order in order to allow doctors of chiropractic who have graduated from Council on Chiropractic Education-accredited chiropractic colleges to perform chiropractic in Taiwan, and the LY to pass a Chiropractic Physician Law containing examination and licensing provisions.

#### Comment

18. (SBU) According to AmCham estimates, legitimizing chiropractic in Taiwan could lead to millions of dollars in annual U.S. equipment and education exports. We will continue to advocate for DOH to amend its 2003 Executive Order banning chiropractic doctors from practicing in Taiwan, and recognize chiropractic as a legitimate and distinct medical practice. We think the most effective way to achieve this goal would be within the context of bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) talks. End Comment.

YOUNG